



From the Principal's Pen

Dear Poolesville Families,

Our newsletter this month is shining a light on some of our departments. The Resource Teachers (Heads of the Department) have written a brief description of the instructional activities that have been occurring or will be occurring in their particular discipline.

Deena Levine
 Principal



Mr. Dan McKenna is the Resource Teacher of our English Department. He earned his undergraduate degree at The Pennsylvania State University and his Master's degree at the University of Michigan. He is currently working on a degree in School Administration. He also has been our Head of Humanities House. Prior to transferring to PHS, Mr. McKenna was a teacher in the International Baccalaureate Program at Richard Montgomery High School. Mr. McKenna, as many of you already know, is the sponsor of our award-winning Debate Team. When Mr. McKenna took over the Debate Team at PHS, we had only 8 members. Today our team has over 70 talented debaters! He also co-founded and continues to coach the Shakespeare Club, which performs annually at the Folger Shakespeare Theater. (see article on page 2)



Ms. Anu Sekhsaria is the Resource Teacher of the Science Department. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Biological and General Science Education, Summa Cum Laude, from the University of Maryland and her Master's Degree in Biotechnology, Magna Cum Laude, from Johns Hopkins University. We offer five different specialty certificated areas of studies and she supervises all of them. Like Mr. McKenna, Ms. Sekhsaria transferred from the International Baccalaureate Program at Richard Montgomery High School. (see article on page 2)



Mr. Clayton Traver is the Interim Resource Teacher for our Social Studies department. Mr. Traver has been teaching with MCPS for three years. Mr. Traver earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Studies from the College of William and Mary. He earned a Master of Arts degree from North Carolina State University. Mr. Traver holds his Standard Professional Certificate in both English 7-12 and Social Studies 5-12 from the Maryland State Department of Education. Mr. Traver has taught in the English Department as well as Social Studies. (see article on page 3)



Ms. Laura Friedman is our Special Education Resource Teacher and is the first member of our Hall of Excellence for long term service to PHS. Ms. Friedman began her career in education as a special education/math teacher at Poolesville High School 26 years ago and has been passionate about our school since she first walked on campus as a graduate of University of Maryland. She also earned her Master's Degree from UMD. In addition to her responsibilities as head of the Special Education Department, Ms. Friedman is also the co-sponsor of the Class of 2019. (see article on page 4)



Mr. Terry Young, Resource Teacher for Technology, Physical Education, and Health, is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania and earned his Master's degree from McDaniel College. Mr. Young is also the supervisor of Project Lead the Way, our outstanding advanced engineering program. Mr. Young has long served the PHS community. He was a teacher at John Poole Middle School before he transferred to PHS. He is currently working on a degree in School Administration. He is also the coach for our Forensics Team. (see article on page 4)





English Department

“What did you learn in school today?”

This question, when asked at the kitchen table, often can lead to a shrug (“nothing”), an awkward silence (“umm . . .”), a struggle to remember some moment of the day (“yeah we had this uh, um, this thing in our history class about, um, uh, y’know”), an amusing story that happened at lunch or a tirade about a bad moment.

In the interest of helping our students and their families have deeper discussions about the work students are doing in our classes, the English Department would like to offer a few highlights of what is coming up and suggest a few questions that might help you talk about the books your children are reading (even if you didn’t read them!). Our teachers are so dedicated to the growth of your children not only as students but also as human beings; they would love to hear how their learning translates into the conversations you may be having with them.

The ninth grade students will be writing short vignettes modeled on the style of the novella, *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros. In these creative pieces, students may be thinking about how to create symbols that represent or images that depict some aspect about their own sense of who they are. Parents could share a writer whose style they admire or ask their children about what objects or pieces they think would best capture something of their identity. Later in the quarter, students will be reading John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, a classic of the high school English curriculum that can spark important conversations on friendship and ethics: Was George a good friend? What responsibility does a community have to protect its vulnerable members? Should we understand, condemn, or accept George’s final decision? Parents can always ask our students to remind them of the key moments in the story.

As you likely know by now, our sophomores are deep into the research process; they have chosen contemporary social justice topics, investigated causes and possible solutions, and must now build the case for how to solve or greatly reduce the harms of their selected problem. Teachers have led them through this process and guided them to explore how a non-profit organization could be involved in their recommended solution. To spark their thinking, the tenth grade team invited Rob Scheer, founder of the nonprofit Comfort Cases, Inc. to speak to our students about his work and the way that nonprofit organizations can work for positive change. Questions about students’ reactions to hearing about the work of this and other nonprofits may yield thoughtful answers. In addition, the more opportunities students have to talk through their research the more exact their thinking about possible solutions becomes. “Can you tell me what you have learned in your research?” is a great way to start. To connect research on justice to literature, our students will also be reading Elie Wiesel’s moving and terrifying account of life during the Holocaust, *Night*. There is difficult material in this book and students may benefit from additional opportunities to process their reading experiences.

Dinner table discussions could center on the importance of tolerance and respect and the need for accurate reporting and empathy for victims of the atrocities of the past and the present.

Our juniors recently finished writing an Op-Ed column after studying several models; we all know how many teens enjoy trying on different points of view and this format gives them the opportunity to present an argument that is compelling to the general reader. Do not miss the chance to give your child’s piece a read; I would not be surprised if it is more persuasive than most of the editorials I read each day. Students may enjoy being asked to predict what someone who disagreed with them might say. Next up for English 11 Honors is study of the play *Fences* by August Wilson, which explores the tendency for different generations to come into conflict with each other. Young people are often interested in hearing about their parents’ own struggles with growing up and how they learned to resolve conflicts with their own parents. Denzel Washington’s excellent and emotionally raw film version of the play could spark meaningful conversations about coping with disappointments, defying aging, and learning to forgive others.

Finally, our seniors begin their final semester at Poolesville High School. This quarter, they are exploring the play *Doll’s House*, by Henrik Ibsen, and *Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams, and the novel, *Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood. These works provoke important and timely questions for people on the cusp of adulthood: How have the roles for men and women changed over time? When should someone pursue a desire no matter what? Is there ever a time when someone needs to step back from a strong desire? As twelfth-graders look forward to graduation and beyond, they will close their year with the opportunity to collect and reflect on their writing over the past four years. Similarly, do not miss the chance to ask your soon-to-graduate child how they think they have grown since the first class at Poolesville. You could share your own thoughts as well.

Daniel McKenna, Daniel_J_McKenna@mcpsmd.org



Science Department

As the Science Resource Teacher, I know I speak for all the science teachers when I say that we love our jobs, especially working with our incredible students. I am privileged to work with both a fabulous student body and an enthusiastic and creative department.

It is such a pleasure to watch each individual, be it a student or a teacher, reach and go beyond their own expectations. Each year I am optimistic that the environmental and scientific problems of the world will be solved due to the innovation and passion of our talented students. *(Cont. on page 3)*



Science Department continued

The 2018-2019 school year is progressing well in Science with each discipline working, in its own unique manner, to nurture scientific inquiry in the minds of our fabulous young students. The department is focusing on helping students develop their skills in clarifying the strengths and weaknesses of various lines of evidence and then, based on their evaluations, identifying the best explanation for a natural phenomenon. In our three required science courses, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, students examined specimens, conducted experiments and had discussions to acquire and cement their scientific understanding.

In Biology, the students spent the first semester examining the structure and function of cells and macromolecules, inheritance and finally, the flow of energy and the interactions within ecosystems. They participated in various laboratory experiences from simulating cell division to calculating the amount of carbon dioxide produced when exercising. One of the highlights was a field trip to the National Aquarium in Baltimore, MD where students were able to observe interactions between organisms.

In Chemistry, students examined the structures of atoms and molecules and how they interact in various settings. In order to explore the structures, students built atomic models out of toothpicks and gum drops to visualize the three dimensional structures which have a huge impact on an atom's ability to react.

In Physics, the students spent first semester investigating work, energy and power. They designed experiments and collected data for multiple authentic experiences. For example, each physics student calculated their individual horsepower by direct experimentation. They performed push-ups, leg lifts and traversed a flight of steps to calculate how much horsepower they had developed during the physical activity.

As the second semester starts, please know that all of the science staff are committed to helping all students succeed in all their classes. If your child has concerns about field trips, makeup work, or general concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or their science teacher.

Please feel free to contact me [Anupama M Sekhsaria@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Anupama_M_Sekhsaria@mcpsmd.org) for additional updates or questions.



Social Studies Department

It is my great pleasure as Acting Resource Teacher to introduce you to the excellent teachers and exciting courses offered by the

Social Studies department at PHS. The Social Studies department has some of the most dedicated and capable teachers that I've had the pleasure to work with. Our staff includes two National Board certified teachers, several world travelers, and a rare dedication to extracurricular activities.

Among other student organizations, we sponsor the History Bowl and Bee teams, the Mock Trial team, and our champion swim team. Last year our History Bowl team was the highest ranked new team in the national competition, and the size of the team has tripled since then! On Saturday, February 2nd, the team competed in Howard County, and we expect that they performed admirably.

In social studies we have a large selection of elective courses to help students explore many different elements of the human experience. One of our most popular courses, AP Psychology, not only prepares students for pre-medical programs at university but also allows students to understand how their own minds work and to analyze human behavior, a useful skill in any career. Sociology, a companion discipline to psychology, helps students to understand how human societies function and the reasons for our traditions, norms, and cultural biases. The department also offers comparative religion, law, and economics for more specialized studies in human structures. As a result of the diversity of courses offered in the department, social studies electives combine knowledge from several subject areas as math, science, and language arts that are crucial to mastering the content in the courses I mentioned.

The teachers in our department have been working hard day in and day out to keep our rigorous courses at the cutting edge as the requirements for Advanced Placement classes are updated. Both AP NSL and AP World History are in the midst of a curriculum change, so we have been on our toes revisiting our lessons and reorganizing our approach to the content. AP NSL has a stronger skills focus in the new curriculum, and our students are working hard to develop their writing and analysis skills. AP World History is in the process of transitioning into a modern world history class which focuses on human history since 1450. Eventually, there will be a separate class for world history before 1450. World history is very long and only getting longer, and this curriculum change will allow our students to spend more time on the important topics that still impact our societies today.

As for our core classes, the instructors for American History, NSL, and Modern World History continue to do their best on a daily basis to challenge their students and teach them to both ask and answer difficult questions about the world today. All three courses focus heavily on document analysis, writing and argument skills, and the complex task of thinking historically.

Rather than focus purely on memorization of the content, our goal as a department is to teach students important college and career skills that will be essential in their future pursuits.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to email me at any time at [Clayton F Traver@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Clayton_F_Traver@mcpsmd.org).



Special Education Department

Greetings from the PHS Special Education Department!

Within the Special Education Department at PHS, we have a variety of different job titles including special education teachers, para-educators, transition support teachers, and speech and language pathologists. We describe ourselves as part of a team because we work closely together to ensure our students have a successful experience at PHS.

Below is a sample of the responsibilities of the Special Education team at PHS.

- Develop and review Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each student
- Co-teach and support students with an IEP in general education classes
- Modify assignments, assessments, and presentation options as needed to allow access to the curriculum for all students.
- Teach and support students in whole class lessons, in small groups, and one-on-one
- Implement IEPs, assess students' performance, and track their progress
- Update IEPs throughout the school year to reflect students' progress and goals
- Discuss student progress with parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators
- Prepare and help students transition from grade to grade and to life after high school graduation

And who are our students? Students who receive special education services are members of all four PHS Houses – Global Ecology, Humanities, Independent Studies Program, and Science Math Computer Science. Some of our students attend part of each day in Technology Education programs through MCPS such as the Construction Trades Program at the Edison Center, The Auto Technology Program at Damascus High School, and the Child Development Program at Seneca Valley High School. Students with an IEP are members of PHS sports teams, clubs, drama presentations, and honor societies. Our students graduate and go on to four-year colleges, community colleges, the military, into the work force, and to training programs.

A student does not need to have an IEP to benefit from some of the services our Special Education team provides. The Resource Classroom at PHS is a welcoming place during the lunch period for all students to receive extra-help and academic support. Every day at lunch you will find the room packed with students (with and without IEPs) working with members of the Special Education team. We've made our Resource Classroom a welcoming and inviting place for students during lunch to receive academic support to enhance their learning or just a safe place to meet friends and eat lunch.

It's been my pleasure to work as a member of the PHS Special Education team to assist all students with IEPs to have a successful experience at PHS so they can move on to be

responsible, independent members of post high school work teams, training programs, and institutions of higher learning.

Sincerely,

Laura Friedman

Special Education Resource Teacher

Laura_W_Friedman@mcpsmd.org



Technology Department

"Collaboration allows teachers to capture each other's fund of collective intelligence." --Mike Schmoker

Greetings. As the new Resource Teacher for the Technology, Health and Physical Education Department, I can't say enough about how the quote above supports the work we do as your child's teachers on a daily basis. We did a little calculation at the beginning of the year, and we figured out that we have a total of 216 years of teaching for our 12-member team! Needless to say, there's a lot of "collective intelligence" that we've be utilizing and sharing when we get together during our planning and department meetings. As one of the main benefactors of observing the great work our teachers do to prepare, support, and engage our students in their classes, I've witnessed a lot of phenomenal teachers teaching, and students learning, during the first semester.

Earlier, in the Fall, our health and PE teachers (Ms. Grubb, Mr. Lang, Mr. Sickeri, Mr. Tucker, and Ms. Wohnhas), collaborated with the U.S. Army to organize a high-energy, high-interest, engaging day filled with various skills tests, team-building activities, nutrition stations, etc. to promote healthy living: both physically, through exercise and what we eat, and mentally. All of this supported what the students are learning and doing in the classroom: Honors Health: goal setting, self-esteem building, decision making, managing stress, the stigma of mental illnesses, and suicide. Guest speakers from the guidance department will be discussing mental illness and suicide while visitors from Arise and Flourish will speak about drug abuse. While in Physical Education, the students will participate in a variety of activities: volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, weight training, etc.





Technology Department continued

Switching gears to technology, in November, our senior Science Math Computer Science students brilliantly presented their internships. In

the summer of 2018, these students dedicated their time and life to a very rigorous internship at many prestigious institutions like NIST and NIH. After building and testing various devices, and collecting and analyzing data, they put together a very sophisticated presentation on their findings. Every year, the students and their presentations never cease to amaze us.

Great job students, and many thanks to all the teachers who helped (especially those in our department: Mr. Lee, Mr. Estep, Mr. Kingman, Mr. Sell and Mrs. Bailey).

Finally, another component of our technology department is our Project Lead the Way Advanced Engineering Program (Mr. Gordon, Mr. Hill, Mrs. Weber and Mr. Young). This is a four year program in which the students enroll in five classes. They experience a wide range of topics from auto-cad, robotics, digital electronics, architecture, and much, much more. The students participate in a variety of activities, go on several field trips, and visit with guest speakers. On Wednesday, February 13, a bioengineer from George Mason University will be visiting the students during fourth period in the auditorium to share his experiences and life's work in the engineering field. Another opportunity for the students will be on Thursday, February 21



from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm; we are hosting an "Engineering Night." Our senior engineering students will be sharing their capstone projects. While, at the same time, the underclassmen will be running a variety of engineering-based activities for visitors to participate (K-8 students and adults). Engineers from multiple disciplines will also be on-site sharing their experiences. In addition, several colleges will be with us to talk about their programs and next step for our students to consider. Finally, we will have a brief parent meeting so you can learn how you can partner with us to make this a positive, successful experience for our students. Please join us for this event and consider joining our "partnership team."

Other opportunities for students to get involved in technology are through our First Robotics Club (started in January), First Technology Challenge (already entered in the state competition), and our Computer Science Team (participates in a variety of competitions: Cyber Patriot, CSAW, MCPS Forensics), and many students work on Source America Projects – these help people with disabilities perform their job with more ease and efficiency. Here's a link <https://bit.ly/2DMweKs> to visit, to learn more about the work the students are tasked.



I look forward to the second semester. Rest assured, more great things are to come for our students to experience.

Sincerely,

Terry Young

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